

Application No.: 09/095,365

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (currently amended). A sheet sorting apparatus for adhering a marker to each predetermined sheet of a group of sheets being output by an image processing apparatus, comprising:

a tape feeder for pulling out a tape, whose width is smaller than that of said sheets, having a pressure sensitive adhesive on one side edge;

a cutter for making the marker by cutting the tape at a preset length;

a guide for positioning the marker at a predetermined position on the predetermined sheet;

and

a marker and sheet feeder for synchronously feeding the marker and the predetermined sheet in a partially overlapping position,

wherein the marker and sheet feeder are formed as a pair of feeding means for positioning in contact with each other when the marker is adhered to the predetermined sheet, and separate from each other when sheets not receiving a marker are fed, and

the marker is adhered to the predetermined sheet by a predetermined pressure force as the predetermined sheet passes through the marker and sheet feeder without pausing the marker and sheet feeder, with one portion of the marker overlapping and in contact with the predetermined sheet and remainder of the marker protruding from the predetermined sheet to indicate a boundary between a sheet or group of sheets and a subsequent sheet or group of sheets.

Claim 2 (previously presented). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said marker is adhered to the under side of the sheet.

Claim 3 (previously presented). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, further comprising:

a character mark printer for applying a predetermined color pattern or character to the marker; and

a printer controller for determining the character or pattern to print on the marker, so that the same character or pattern is printed on each said marker in a group of said sheets.

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Claim 4 (previously presented). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for changing the adhering position of the marker on the sheet.

Claim 5 (previously presented). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a marker detector in a forward position of the sheet sorting apparatus.

Claim 6 (previously presented). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a tape end detector on the path of the tape for signaling an exchange of the tape.

Claim 7 (original). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a single motor for driving the tape feeder, the cutter, the guide and the marker and sheet feeder.

Claim 8 (original). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the tape feeder, the cutter, the guide and the marker and sheet feeder are driven by an external motor.

Claim 9 (original). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the character mark printer is an inkjet printer for applying the predetermined color pattern to the marker.

Claim 10 (original). The sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the character mark printer is a stamper for applying the predetermined character to the marker.

Claim 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (Currently amended). An image processing apparatus comprising a sheet sorting apparatus for adhering a marker to each predetermined sheet of a group of sheets discharged from the image processing apparatus, the sheet sorting apparatus comprising:

a tape feeder for pulling out a tape, whose width is smaller than that of said sheets, having a pressure sensitive adhesive on one side edge;

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a guide for positioning the marker at a predetermined position on the predetermined sheet;
and

a marker and sheet feeder for synchronously feeding the marker and the predetermined sheet in a partially overlapping position,

wherein the marker and sheet feeder are formed as a pair of feeding means for positioning in contact with each other when the marker is adhered to the predetermined sheet and separate from each other when sheets not receiving a marker are fed, and

the marker is adhered to the predetermined sheet by a predetermined pressure force as the predetermined sheet passes through the marker and sheet feeder without pausing the marker and sheet feeder with one portion of the marker overlapping and in contact with the predetermined sheet and the remainder of the marker protruding from the predetermined sheet to indicate a boundary between a sheet or group of sheets and a subsequent sheet or group of sheets.

Claim 13 (original). The image processing apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising a tray for receiving sheets being output by the image processing apparatus, wherein at least one side of the tray is lower than the middle part of the tray.

Claim 14 (previously presented). A sheet sorting apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the exchange of the position of the feeding means is operated synchronously with the operation of the cutter.

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